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RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 6940  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 5018  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3606  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0757  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 3693  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2773  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 7514  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5217  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1895  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY  
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000428

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS  
MCC FOR S GROFF, D NASSIRY, E BURKE AND F REID

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/12/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)  
SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: MILITARY STRIKES LTTE BASES IN  
THOPPIGALA

REF: A. COLOMBO 422  
[B](#). COLOMBO 302  
[C](#). COLOMBO 265  
[D](#). COLOMBO 140

Classified By: Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Jr., for reasons 1.4(b,d).

[1](#). (C) SUMMARY: On March 12, the Sri Lankan military launched its latest campaign in Thoppigala. Thoppigala, roughly between Polonnaruwa and Batticaloa, is home to a cluster of LTTE bases, which are among the last significant LTTE camps remaining in the east. Sri Lanka's air force used Kfir and MiG-27 aircraft to bomb identified, strategic LTTE targets in the area on March 12, 13 and 14. Military Spokesman Prasad Samarasinghe claimed that 10 STF and soldiers have been killed and 22 others injured, and a total of 78 LTTE cadres have died, including two senior LTTE intelligence leaders. End summary.

Sri Lanka Military Keeps Its Word  
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[2](#). (C) On March 12, the Sri Lankan military launched its latest campaign in Thoppigala, between Polonnaruwa and Batticaloa. Army Commander Major General Fonseka told Ambassador Blake on January 23 that the military would be operating in Thoppigala to remove several hundred LTTE cadre that remained there after the fall of Vakarai on January 20 (ref c). Thoppigala is home to a cluster of LTTE camps and is one of the last significant LTTE-controlled areas remaining in the east. Military Spokesman Brigadier Prasad Samarasinghe told POL FSN that the preparation stages of this operation began as early as March 5.

[3](#). (C) Sri Lanka's air force used Kfir and MiG-27 aircraft to bomb identified strategic LTTE targets in the Narakamulla jungle on March 12, 13 and 14. According to Air Force Group Captain Ajantha Silva, the attacks were launched after terrorists were identified and found preparing for attacks on the security forces. He also said that the LTTE had been

launching artillery and mortar bomb attacks on civilians and troops from the Thoppigala camp. A military spokesman said that LTTE rebels had attempted to gather for a counterattack, but were disrupted by air strikes on the morning March 14, which caused heavy damage to LTTE forces. On March 15, Military Spokesman Prasad Samarasinghe said that 10 STF and soldiers had been killed and 22 others injured. Ground operations supported by multi-barrel rocket launchers are continuing on March 15. Ground troops are moving toward Karadiyanaru, west of Batticaloa and will focus for the next two days on clearing the Karadiyanaru-Ampara road.

#### LTTE Losses Mounting

14. (SBU) The LTTE has confirmed the attack in Thoppigala, but has denied taking any casualties. According to a military spokesman, at least 10 LTTE cadre were killed when jets attacked the Thoppigala base on Monday, and 47 were killed throughout Eastern Province over the weekend. Brig. Samarasinghe told POL FSN that a total of 78 LTTE cadres have died, according to intercepted LTTE radio communications. A Government press release confirmed that two senior LTTE intelligence leaders, Vendran and Illakkian, were seriously injured in air strikes on March 12 and succumbed to their injuries on March 13. Two LTTE cadre surrendered to the security forces in Black Bridge on March 14 and reported that LTTE forces around Batticaloa are suffering from severe shortages of food and medical supplies. The Sri Lankan Defense Ministry reports that the LTTE has occupied the Karadiyanaru Hospital and is refusing to treat civilians. Samarasinghe told POL FSN that LTTE cadres are grouping in

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Karadiyanaru and have set up gun positions around Karadiyanaru School. Meanwhile, a group of LTTE cadre attacked a Special Task Force (STF) foot patrol in Ampara District on March 14. The STF retaliated killing one LTTE cadre.

15. (C) COMMENT: LTTE's denials notwithstanding, it appears evident that the military's current campaign is making significant inroads into the LTTE's former strongholds in the east. However, Government statements about LTTE casualties are normally inflated, so should be taken with a large grain of salt. Embassy's AID section reports ref a about the grave humanitarian situation resulting from the recent government offensive.

BLAKE